

Strategies to Become a Productive Writer

FW 893: Sec. 301

Spring Break 2019

Course Description and Policies

Instructor:	Dr. Jen C. Owen
Lecture Period:	March 4 – 8 th ; 9-4pm daily. 115 International Center
Textbook:	NA
Other:	Laptop computer for writing and any other materials needed for working on a writing project of your choice
Office (Owen):	Natural Resources 42D
Office Hours:	By appointment only
Telephone:	432-4264
Email:	owenj@msu.edu (preferred)

Course Description

Do you struggle with writing? Do you frequently sit down to write and find yourself surfing the web or on social media websites only to find that an hour later you never actually produced a sentence? Do you always find some reason why you cannot write – e.g. you do not have enough data, you have too much data, you haven't exhaustively read the literature, your desk is too cluttered, you need to clean the house first, you are not good at writing, and the excuses go on! If this sounds like you, rest assured you are not alone. Many people struggle with writing; yet, writing is a core part of graduate school, whether it is writing a thesis/dissertation, grant proposals, and/or publishing your research. Further, if you are pursuing a career in academia or other professional career, writing is going to be the primary means by which you will disseminate your research and communicate with your professional network. Regardless of whether you have good or poor writing skills, it can be a struggle just to get the words on the paper. And, one of the primary ways to become a more proficient writer is by writing more.

Seminar Format:

Each student is expected to have one writing project they are working on. It can be a thesis, dissertation chapter, manuscript, grant proposal, or a prospectus/thesis proposal. The seminar is intended for writing and not doing literature research or data analysis; hence, everyone should have done their analyses and literature searches prior to the week-long seminar, or during the evenings. We will meet in the same location each day and the day will be divided into blocks of time for independent writing separated by lectures or discussions.

Lecture topics are listed below but are aimed to help students develop effective writing and time management strategies that will help them be successful in graduate school and their chosen profession. Additionally, we will cover tools and strategies for writing and publishing a scientific paper.

Seminar requirements/course expectations

1. Must attend daily for the full course time, i.e. typically 9-4pm
2. Must document daily objective for writing project and then document daily accomplishments (e.g # of words, pages, or sections), stumbling blocks and/or successes. Report this information using the shared Google document online.
3. Complete a backward planning timeline on your own time.

Together number 1 and 2 represent 80% and number 3 represents 20% of your final grade in the seminar.

Assignment of Grades:

- 4.0 Meets or exceeds all course expectations
- 3.5 Meets 90-99% of course expectations
- 3.0 Meets 85-89% of the course expectations
- 2.5 Meets 78 – 84% of the course expectations
- 2.0 Meets 70 – 77% of the course expectations
- 1.5 Meets 60 – 69% of the course expectations
- 1.0 Meets 50 – 59% of the course expectations
- 0.0 Meets less than 50% of the course expectations

General Daily Schedule (MWF):

0900– 1000: Lecture
1015 – 1030: Break
1030 - 1145: Writing
1145 – 1245: Lunch
1245 – 1345: Lecture/discussion
1345 – 1400: Break
1400 – 1530: Writing
1530 – 1600: Recap

General Daily Schedule (TTH):

0900 – 1030: Writing
1030 – 1045: Break
1045 – 1145: Lecture/discussion
1145 – 1245: Lunch
1245 – 1415: Writing
1415 – 1430: Break
1430 – 1600: Lecture/Recap

Table 1. Actual Schedule of 2015 Spring Break Seminar

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
0900	Lecture: Intro; Issues with being a productive writer	Individual Writing 0900 - 1030	Lecture: Writing Tips Writing clearer sentences	Individual Writing 0900 - 1030	Individual Writing 0900 - 1030	
1000						Break 1000 - 1015
						Individual Writing: 1015 - 1145
						Break: 1030 - 1045
	Break: 1030 - 1045	Break: 1030 - 1045	Break: 1030 - 1045	Break: 1030 - 1045	Break: 1030 - 1045	
	Individual Writing: 1045 - 1145	Lecture: Time Management Backward Planning	Individual Writing: 1015 - 1145	Lecture: Bibliographic Software Mendeley	Lecture: Replying to manuscript reviews Revise & Resubmit	
1100	Lunch: 1145 - 1245					Lunch: 1145 - 1245
1200	Lecture: Tools and Strategies for Writing	Individual Writing	Lecture: Bibliographic Software Endnote	Individual Writing: 1245 - 1400	Optional Writing	
1300						Break: 1345 - 1400
1400	Individual Writing: 1400 - 1530	Individual Writing 1400 - 1445	Individual Writing	Break: 1400 - 1415		
				Lecture: Manuscript submission strategies		
1500		Lecture: Tips on the act of Writing a Scientific Paper	Break	Individual Writing	Celebrate! Happy Hour!	
				Room Booked		